STAMP World

Stamps are often called small ambassadors, meaning that they tell people in other countries about the country of their origin. They have information about the culture, history, geography, people, nature, activities and many positive aspects of life in the country of origin.

A stamp like any other product has features that can be used to identify it. Stamps are pretty pictures, stickers and are also like receipts because they show that you have paid for postage and you can buy them at places other than the post office counters, but what makes these labels proper stamps? Below are common features of stamps:

- **A postage stamp has the name of the country**. e.g. South Africa and Ascension Island. The only country in the world whose name does not appear on postage stamps is the United Kingdom because England was the first country in the world to issue postage stamps in 1853. The stamp called the Penny Black showed a profile of a young Queen Victoria. Since then English stamps have been identified by the head of the reigning monarch on them.
- **A postage stamp has a postage rate or value**. Most special or commemorative stamps in South Africa do not have the value written in monetary terms, e.g. R 2.05 instead we indicate what it's for, for example, Standard Postage or International Airmail Small Letter or Airmail Postcard rate.
- **Another feature that modern stamps have is perforations**; these are for easy separation of stamps. Many of the self adhesive stamps that we have are roulette for easy separation.
- **Modern postage stamps are either printed on phosphor paper or phosphor bands are applied on to the stamps**. This is often difficult to see especially if the whole stamp has phosphor and it is not only on bands. Phosphor is easy to spot under a UV light! Phosphor is detected by sorting machines. A South African stamp without phosphor will not be processed. It's rather difficult to cheat the Post Office!
- **The name of the artist usually appears on the stamp**. In South Africa almost all our recent stamps bear the name of the artist.
- **The year of issue appears on stamps of many countries**. In some countries the date is so small that you need a magnifying glass to find it.
- **The reason why the stamp was issued or its theme usually appears on stamps**. Note the SAA 75 Years.

For more information on stamps and stamp collecting contact:
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